2: Mountford OI20 Tiwi OI20

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[For material on adult initiation rites see category 881.]

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SHARK DANCE is among traditional, imitative figures that are performed during ritual preparation of toxic *Kulama* yams.

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ceived additional instruction in spear-fishing and birding, while girls were taught more intensively to locate and identify edible plants. The children, as a result, were generally independent economically in their early teens, by

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which time the girls were already married. Young males contributed to their parents' larder and to other households, but did not marry and acquire households until they

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were more than thirty years old. Even now, this late marriage age obtains in theory, but not always in practice.

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THUS, to the Tiwi, economic independence and/or marriage did not alone signify adulthood. The Tiwi adult was intellectually, rather than physiologically, a mature individual who was expected to join actively in the non-economic affairs of the community. An adult was also expected to be almost entirely responsible for his own health, wealth, and future prospects. This included attaining success in hunting and in war and, for the men, in wife-collecting. If an adult became ill or was injured or, as a Tiwi would say, was unlucky in the pursuit of life's benefits, he alone was responsible for not behaving as an adult should.

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The annual *Kulama* ceremony, held by each community in April at the end of the rainy season, was a most important event to insure individual success. Although a collec-

[P. 11, (C)]
[TEXT CONTINUES ON P. 12(C)]

884 194 the technique had to be made meaningful to the initiates, the lifesaving qualities of this famine food were explained as health-giving powers. A ceremony accompanied by song and dance was certainly a dramatic and effective means of impressing the initiates in preparation methods. The ritual [189] served another purpose as well: because traveling is so difficult during the rainy season, each household is isolated from the others. The *Kulama* ritual follows this period, and it is natural to expect a reunion to be an occasion to exchange news, settle differences, and tell stories or sing songs that keep traditions alive.

● 885 MUCH harder to account for is the Tiwi idea of adulthood. That every adult is solely responsible for his own health and wealth, and that success in life depends entirely on personal behavior and industry, are ideals [171] strangely similar to those that underlie the American way of life, despite the great gulf between the aboriginal culture and our own. But it is not at all surprising that the Tiwi 177 have a great sympathy for much of Western civilization. Many hold the same views as the *Kulama* singer quoted earlier in this article who saw his children wearing clothes [181] and shoes and going to school to learn to write, for this is the Tiwi's contemporaneous idea of success in a way of life introduced to them only a few short years ago.

[114] Early in the summer of 1962 I revisited the Tiwi for two weeks. Although I knew that the Tiwi desired schooling and training in European ways of life and would seize any such opportunity afforded them, I was hardly prepared for the tremendous changes that had taken place during the eight years that had elapsed since my first visit.

[871] Three months after the *Kulama* ceremony of 1954, a government school was opened. Now all the Tiwi children go to school, and some who have finished the six-year program in the government school have received subsequent training as teaching or nursing assistants. Some others have had "on-the-job" training in various activities connected with a large-scale forestry project that has been started on Melville Island. In fact, all the able-bodied Tiwi men and women are currently employed, and their tasks bear little or no relation to their old life in the bush.

It is perhaps significant—but to me not at all surprising—that I did not hear a single real complaint from the Tiwi regarding their new manner of living. They seem to like it and are anticipating bigger and better things (in the [224] Western sense) for their children. Hunting has become [868] a week-end diversion and the children receive little or no real instruction in that traditional skill.

178 784 SOME aspects of Tiwi life are slow to die, however. Most of the old taboos, the observance of which was considered necessary in the past in order to insure health and wealth, are still observed, although at least one teen-ager expressed doubt that the taboos had any actual effect on the outcome of one's life. Western medicine and public 177 health practices are fast replacing belief in the *Kulama*. 884 During the past eight years only three men have begun the six years of training for *Kulama* initiation, and some of the older men no longer participate in the ceremony. However, as long as even a small number of Tiwi believe in the *Kulama*, the ritual will survive, but I doubt that it will for long.

000 NEAR END of *Kulama* ceremony, performer, although hoarse and tired, must continue to sing until late in the night. [P. 16, (B)]